

CHAPTER 1 – General Information

- 1.A. Purpose
- 1.B. Policy Considerations
 - 1.B.1. Authorization for Awards and Penalties for the Unauthorized Disposition
 - 1.B.2. Awards as Recognition
 - 1.B.3. Periods of Meritorious Service and/or Acts
 - 1.B.4. Benefits for Extraordinary Heroism
 - 1.B.5. Posthumous Awards
 - 1.B.6. Privacy Considerations
 - 1.B.7. Revocation of Awards
 - 1.B.8. Cash, Gratuities, Gift Certificates
- 1.C. Personnel Eligible to Receive Military Medals and Decorations
 - 1.C.1. Active Duty and Reservists
 - 1.C.2. Academy Cadets
 - 1.C.3. Public Health Service and Chaplain Corps
 - 1.C.4. PCS Assignment to Another Military Service
 - 1.C.5. TAD Assignments
 - 1.C.6. CG Auxiliaries
- 1.D. Personal/Unit Awards and Decorations, Approval Authority & Precedence
- 1.E. Preparation of the Award Recommendation
 - 1.E.1 Initiation
 - 1.E.2. Preparation of Form CG-1650 and Summary of Action (SOA)
 - 1.E.3. Citation Preparation

- 1.F. Forwarding Award Recommendations
 - 1.F.1. Recommended by Other than Commanding Officer
 - 1.F.2. Recommendation for the Award of the Purple Heart Medal
- 1.G. Processing Award Recommendations
 - 1.G.1. Awards Delegated to Commanding Officers
 - 1.G.2. Flag Level Approval Authority Responsibilities
 - 1.G.3. Coast Guard Board of Awards
- 1.H. Issuance, Procurement and Wearing of Decorations and Awards
 - 1.H.1. Initial and Duplicate Issue
 - 1.H.2. Awarding Authority Procurement
 - 1.H.3. Wearing of Awards and Decorations
- 1.I. Award Maintenance Responsibilities
 - 1.I.1. Awarding Authority
 - 1.I.2. Servicing PERSRU
 - 1.I.3. Member

Table 1 – Awards and Decorations (in order of precedence).

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose. This Manual contains Coast Guard policy, regulations and information concerning awards available to individuals and units in or associated with the Coast Guard. It explains procedures for awarding personal and unit decorations, and service awards, nonmilitary decorations; and acceptance of foreign military decorations by members of the Armed Forces of the United States. It describes the various awards and the eligibility requirement for each. Some awards not usually associated with the Coast Guard are also mentioned for informational purposes. The Commandant via Chief, Policy and Standards Division (G-WPM-1) may issue directives and changes as required, to amplify, and modify the provisions of this Manual to meet special situations.

B. Policy Considerations

1. Authorization for Awards and Penalties for Their Unauthorized Disposition.

14 USC 502 authorizes Coast Guard military personnel to be awarded medals, bars, emblems, and insignia under provisions of Congressionally passed laws, Executive Orders issued by the President, directives issued by the Commandant, or amendments to this Manual during peacetime, and by the Secretary of the Navy when the Coast Guard is operating with or under the Navy. In addition, 18 USC 704 prohibits, and imposes a suitable penalty for the unauthorized wearing, manufacture, or sale of any decoration, medal, or ribbon which has or may be authorized by the Armed Forces of the United States, except when authorized under regulations pursuant to law.

2. Awards as Recognition. Military decorations are awarded in recognition of individual and/or sustained acts of heroism, meritorious achievement or meritorious service above and beyond that ordinarily expected, and which distinguish an individual or unit from among those performing similar acts or services. The judicious and timely use of personal decorations and unit awards provides an effective means of fostering high morale, incentive, and esprit de corps; therefore, recommendations for military decorations and awards must be initiated promptly after the act or period of service being recognized, in sufficient time to ensure presentation before the recipient detaches from the unit at which the award was earned. Receipt of a unit/team award does not prohibit a deserving individual from receiving a personal award for individual acts or services performed during the same period. Only one medal representing a given decoration will be issued to an individual. For subsequent awards of the same decoration, stars will be issued (see Table 1 at the end of this chapter).

3. Periods of Meritorious Service and/or Acts. Only one award of a personal decoration will be made for the same act, achievement, or period of meritorious service. However, if a member is cited for heroism or specific meritorious achievement within a longer period that is later recognized by an award for meritorious service, this circumstance is not considered a duplication of recognition and the member may be entitled to two awards. For example:
 - a. An aircrew member is awarded the Air Medal for heroism during a SAR case on 19 Jul 98. Later, the same individual receives the Coast Guard Commendation Medal for outstanding achievement as a shop supervisor from May '95 to June '99. To maintain the separation of the accomplishments being recognized, the award of the Air Medal cannot be mentioned in the citation of the Commendation Medal. Since the two actions are distinct, no duplication exists.
4. Benefits for Extraordinary Heroism. 14 USC 357(i) provides that any enlisted person who retires by reason of 20 years service, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, who has been cited for extraordinary heroism in the line of duty, as determined by the Secretary, is entitled to an increase of 10 percent in retired pay (see article 12-C-16 of the Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series)). Only awards senior to the Coast Guard Commendation medal, including the Gold and Silver Lifesaving Medal, will receive consideration for this added distinction, which must be documented in accordance with paragraph 1.E.3.b. (Statement of Heroic Acts or Meritorious Achievement), where the awarding authority is convinced the act, compared with other acts of heroism, stands alone in comparison. Specifics that awards boards and awarding authorities shall also consider for "extraordinary heroism" include:
 - a. Was the heroic act performed necessary and worthwhile?
 - b. Did the individual performing the act know the potential danger and risks involved?
 - c. Was the act performed voluntarily (should not be penalized for carrying out orders beyond that ordinarily expected under a given set of circumstances)?
 - d. Did the individual choose not to seek cover or safety, or leave a place of comparative safety, to perform the act without direct orders, or without being forced into a more dangerous situation by uncontrolled circumstances?
 - e. If the act were not performed, would there be reason for censure or blame?

- f. Was the individual motivated by a desire for recognition or self-preservation?
5. Posthumous Awards. If an individual dies before receiving an award, the award nevertheless may be made posthumously and the decoration, certification and citation presented to the next of kin with appropriate ceremony (official order of precedence is: widow/widower, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, or eldest grandchild). When a decoration is presented to the widow/widower or their children, duplicate elements of the decoration can be furnished without cost to the parent(s) of the deceased. If a subsequent award, a gold star is attached to the appropriate large medal and the decoration is forwarded for presentation by the presenting authority.
 6. Privacy Considerations. Award recommendations and supporting documentation are considered privileged information and should be made available only to those with a need to know. Originators and officials who review or approve personal award recommendations should not discuss them with nominees until the award has been approved.
 7. Revocation of Awards. Any Coast Guard decoration for a distinguished act, achievement, or service may be revoked if facts, later determined, would have prevented original approval of the decoration. When the awarding authority has determined that an award should be revoked (after consultation with approval authority, supervisors and legal staff), they will notify both the member and CGPC-adm-3.
 8. Cash, Gratuities, Gift Certificates. As a general rule, military members are not entitled to cash awards, gratuities, gift certificates or coupons for recognition of superior performance of duty (to include from other government agencies). There are limited exceptions, however, to include local/unit recognition programs or activities such as "Sailor of the Quarter" or "Coast Guard Person of the Year," that award savings bonds of nominal value, that are clearly intended to create esprit de corps, improve unit teamwork, and maintain or improve mission readiness.
- C. Personnel Eligible to Receive Military Medals and Decorations. 14 USC 497 provides that no individual, nor their representative, shall be awarded a Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, or any Coast Guard medal or emblem if the individual's entire service previous to the period has not been honorable.

1. Active Duty and Reservists. Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria for an award, active or reserve (while participating in authorized periods of training, or while in an active status) may be recommended by competent authority who is senior to the individual being recommended.
 2. Academy Cadets. For purposes of personal awards, U.S. Coast Guard Academy Cadets are considered to be on active duty and are eligible for all military decorations.
 3. Public Health Service and Chaplain Corps. U.S. Public Health Service Officers and members of the Chaplain Corps, while serving with the Coast Guard, are eligible and may be considered for all military decorations.
 4. PCS Assignment to Another Military Service. Coast Guard personnel serving with another United States military service (and vice versa) are authorized to accept and wear awards (at the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) level and below), provided they are not given for the same act or service for which an award has been made or is planned by their Service. Approval authority above the MSM award remains at the Service Chief/Commandant level, and concurrence is required prior to approval.
 5. TAD Assignments. Members of other Uniformed Services temporarily assigned may be recommended for an award, which shall be forwarded through Commandant (G-WPM-1) to the parent service for approval.
 6. CG Auxiliaries. As stipulated in Coast Guard Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series), Auxiliaries are eligible to receive Coast Guard Unit Awards, the Meritorious Team Commendation, and the Special Operations Service Ribbon, in addition to Auxiliary-specific awards. See Chapter 6 for additional information.
- D. Personal/Unit Awards and Decorations, Approval Authority, and Precedence. Table 1 at the end of this chapter lists personal and unit awards in order of precedence (and the prescribed authorized awarding authority for each). For awards authorized for approval at the Flag/SES level, approval authority shall not be delegated below the Flag/SES filling a Flag/SES billeted assignment, except when an O-6/Civilian equivalent or higher is serving in an acting capacity in a vacant Flag/SES billet. For awards authorized at the O-4 to O-6 level, only the assigned Commanding Officer has approval authority.
- E. Preparation of the Award Recommendation.
1. Initiation. A commanding officer, officer-in-charge, or any E-7 or above senior to the individual being recommended may initiate a recommendation for the award of a military decoration. The originator, if other than the commanding officer or officer-in-charge of the individual concerned, must forward the recommendation to that commanding officer for comment and/or recommendation prior to

forwarding via the chain of command. To be meaningful, award recommendations must be timely. For oversight purposes, however, recommendations for unit awards and personal decorations must be submitted within 3 years from the date of the act or service. The exceptions are the Purple Heart and the Gold and Silver Lifesaving Medals, for which no time limitations exist. If a recommendation is otherwise lost, certification by competent authority, accompanied by a copy (or reconstruction) of the recommendation, will be considered.

2. Preparation of Form CG-1650 and Summary of Action (SOA), When Required. Proper completion of form CG-1650 (available on Jetform Filler) and a proposed citation is essential to the timely and accurate processing of personal award recommendations (a one-page Summary of Action (SOA) is required for the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM); there is no page limit on the SOA for awards higher than the MSM or the Unit Commendation.
3. Citation Preparation. In addition to the summary of action (as required), a proposed citation will be prepared by the first level awarding authority for presentation, or for forwarding to the next level awarding authority, as appropriate. Units having the capacity and capability to produce acceptable citations are required to do so when initiating an award recommendation. Fundamentally, a citation is an account of heroic acts or an enumeration of meritorious services or achievements. Although a citation is laudatory and formalized, it should be concise, straightforward and avoid superfluous text. It should cover only the primary action(s) for which the award is extended and should be easily read aloud. It must be factual, contain no classified information, and be adaptable to publication by the media. A citation shall consist of one brief paragraph consisting of the following three parts (see specific examples in Chapters 2, 3 and 4):
 - a. The Opening Sentence.
 - (1) With a standard opening phrase (specific to the award);
 - (2) The duty assignment of the individual;
 - (3) The date/inclusive dates of service on which the recommendation is based; and
 - (4) (Optional) Description of operations of the unit to which attached.
 - b. Statement of Heroic Acts or Meritorious Achievement. The second part of the citation identifies the recipient by name (the grade and surname are used for officers; the surname preceded by Chief Petty Officer, Seaman, etc., for enlisted personnel). It describes the specific duty assignment(s), accomplishment(s), and outstanding personal attributes displayed by the individual. Value of results of achievements may also be included. If duty

was performed in actual combat, the citation should so state. In instances where heroism is indicated, not involving conflict with the enemy, additional information is required in the summary of action to justify this part of the proposed citation when submitting the award for consideration, to include (when pertinent):

- (1) Statement of at least two eyewitnesses (if possible), attesting to their accounts of the incident and containing their opinion as to whether or not the person for whom an award is sought imperiled his or her own life (required in lifesaving cases). A determination of extraordinary heroism should be made (see Benefits for Extraordinary Heroism in paragraph 1.B.4), and cited in the citation.
- (2) The precise locality of the rescue, attempted rescue, or heroic action. Provide a sketch, diagram, picture, video, chart, or map to indicate distances, location of assistance, heights of piers or vessels, etc.
- (3) The date, time of day, weather (sea conditions, wind, air and water temperature), and amount and source of light if at night.
- (4) The names of all those rendering assistance and the nature of the aid attempted/provided; in addition to an account of the cooperation (or lack) on the part of the person being rescued.
- (5) A statement as to the swimming qualifications of the rescuer (required for Lifesaving Medal recommendations).
- (6) For rescues from fires, a detailed description of the event, including the aid received by the rescuer, the extent of any burns, and a description of the outer clothing of the rescuer.

- c. Commendatory Remarks. The third part of the citation is a standard closing sentence, specific to the level of the award recommended (see Chapter 2).

- F. Forwarding Award Recommendations. Personal award recommendations will be addressed and forwarded via the chain of command to the “first level” delegated awarding authority with jurisdiction over the individual at the time the act or service was performed and who is authorized to approve the recommended award (see Table 1 at the end of this chapter). Award recommendations for actions of an operational nature will be forwarded via the operational chain of command that existed at the time of the incident (see Chapter 3 for submission of unit award recommendations). Recommendations for awards previously disapproved by an awarding authority may be reconsidered only upon presentation of new and relevant material evidence that was not available at the time of the original recommendation. Exceptions to forwarding/originating from the chain of command are as follows:

1. Recommended by Other Than Commanding Officer. Awards being originated by someone other than an individual's commanding officer must be forwarded to that commanding officer for comment and/or recommendation prior to forwarding via the chain of command.
2. Recommendation for the award of the Purple Heart Medal. Recommendations for the Purple Heart shall be forwarded directly to Commandant (G-WPM-1) via the Commanding Officer without further reference to the chain of command.

[Sample CG-1650]

G. Processing Award Recommendations.

1. Awards Delegated to Commanding Officers. Commanding Officers who are delegated approval authority (See Table 1 at the end of this chapter) for personal awards shall establish an appropriate internal screening mechanism and review process to consider awards for approval/disapproval, or for further forwarding via the chain of command to the delegated approval authority that is able to consider the level of award being recommended (mandatory for instances when extraordinary heroism is indicated).
2. Flag Level Approval Authority Responsibilities.
 - a. Establish an Awards Board. To more effectively, exercise responsibility to recognize heroic/meritorious performance, an Awards Board shall be established by each Flag Officer/SES with Approval Authority responsibilities (a single board may represent each Assistant Commandant and their Flag/SES-level Directorates). Membership on the board will be determined by the awarding authority, and will be chaired by the Chief of Staff/Assistant Superintendent/Deputy Director/Deputy Commander as appropriate. The board recommendations to the Awarding Authority shall be in writing and will be retained for 5 years before disposal. Responsibilities of the Board include (but are not limited to) the following:
 - (1) Review, evaluate and screen all recommendations referred and provide comments to the awarding authority so that he/she can more effectively consider recommendations for decorations and awards; to include instances where extraordinary heroism is indicated in accordance with paragraph 1.B.4.
 - (2) Ensure that recommendations for decorations and awards, and award elements for those awards, are properly prepared in accordance with this Manual.

- (3) Ensure that all information which may support the recommendation for an award, such as assistance reports and statements of witnesses (if applicable), is carefully considered and that recommendations resulting from such information are forwarded for consideration of the awarding authority.
- (4) The Board, after carefully considering each case on its own merits, may recommend:
 - (a) Approval of the award as recommended (and further forwarding if above the delegated authority of the awarding authority; Awards Board shall endorse their approval on CG-1650).
 - (b) Upgrading to a higher award (and further forwarding if above the delegated authority of the awarding authority; Awards Board shall endorse their approval on CG-1650).
 - (c) Downgrading to a lower award or returning to the initiator if within their ability to approve a lower award
 - (d) Return of the recommendation for clarification or justification
 - (e) No award
- b. Take Action On Awards Board Recommendations. The Awarding Authority may agree or disagree with the recommendations of the Awards Board, and their decision is final. In instances where “extraordinary heroism” is indicated, and in accordance with paragraph 1.B.4., the awards authority may approve that stipulation on behalf of the Secretary for those awards where delegated approval is authorized. Recommendations for all awards not within their delegated authority shall be favorably endorsed by the awarding authority on the CG-1650, then forwarded to Commandant (G-WPM-1) for presentation to the Coast Guard Board of Awards.
- 3. Coast Guard Board of Awards. Established at Coast Guard Headquarters and responsible for considering, reviewing, and making recommendations to the Commandant concerning the following matters:
 - a. Recommendations on Awards. Awarding military decorations and medals and unit awards to those persons and units in the service of the Coast Guard, other military personnel, and to civilians in the case of Lifesaving Medals, that have been recommended, but are not within the delegated authority of the forwarding approval authority (see Table 1 at the end of this chapter).

- b. Forwarding to the Secretary of Transportation. Reviewing military decorations that require referral to the Secretary of Transportation for endorsement or approval.
- c. Policy Recommendations. Making recommendations to the Commandant via the Director of Personnel Management on such matters regarding designs of medals and appurtenances, and policy related to the military medals and awards program, as may be referred or submitted for action by competent authority.
- d. Make Recommendations Regarding Extraordinary Heroism. As stated in paragraphs 1.B.4 and 1.E.3.b., make determinations on “extraordinary heroism,” for those award recommendations within the purview of the Commandant’s awarding authority. If approval is recommended, the Coast Guard Board of Awards will forward the case to the Commandant for approval.

H. Issuance, Procurement and Wearing of Decorations and Awards.

1. Initial and Duplicate Issuance. The Awarding Authority will provide initial sets of awards and decorations, to include initial issuance of ribbons for Unit Commendations, Meritorious Unit Commendations, Meritorious Team Commendations, and the personal award of the Commandant’s Letter of Commendation. Subsequent or duplicate disbursement of personal awards, service medals, campaign medals, unit ribbons, and their attachments is not authorized except in instances where they have been lost, destroyed, or rendered unfit for use through no fault or neglect of the person to whom the medals are awarded. When and if applicable, individuals shall make their request via their chain of command to the first echelon awarding authority that is authorized to award the medal and/or ribbon, requesting replacement and providing an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the loss of the award.
2. Awarding Authority Procurement. The Awarding Authorities listed on Table 1 at the end of this chapter are authorized to procure applicable award elements directly from ELC Baltimore and issue them in accordance with this Manual. A six-month supply of Coast Guard Good Conduct, Coast Guard Reserve Good Conduct, Expert Rifleman, and Expert Pistol Shot Medals shall be kept in stock for issue. All other service medals should be procured as needed, and should not be stockpiled. Presentation cases (stock number 8455-00-890-2166) and 5/16-inch gold stars for awards (stock number 8455-00-141-0888) shall be purchased directly from the Defense Supply Center, Philadelphia, PA.
 - a. Certificates and Special Citations. Stationary has been developed for all Coast Guard Coast Guard military awards that include a large medal as an award element. Special award folders have also been established as an award element, which will not be used for any other

purpose. Local modifications to prescribed format are not authorized. Procedures for processing medal awards using these elements are:

- (1) Certificates. A certificate will be prepared for each medal award. It will be signed by the awarding authority and include the individual's first name, middle initial, last name, date of action or inclusive dates (month and year only) for meritorious service and approval date for the award.
 - (2) Citations. The citation will be typed on a word processor or equivalent machine to ensure error-free citations, which will be prepared horizontally on the award stationery leaving space at the bottom, left side, for the Coast Guard Seal. A gold seal 2-5/16 inches in diameter shall be embossed with the awarding authority's official seal. The recommended format is a maximum of 18 lines of text, using either Times New Roman, or New Century Schoolbook, 12-pitch, bold font. If the "O" or "V" device is authorized, the citation will so indicate. If a subsequent award of the decoration, a star is issued, and shall be so specified in the citation.
 - (3) Padded Folders. The padded, short-side opening presentation folder will be used only for medal awards, with the certificate placed on the right and the citation on the left. The folder may be procured from ELC Baltimore (stock number 7510-01-094-1485).
 - (4) Commandant's Letter of Commendation. Prepared using Commandant's stationery and inserted for presentation in the book-type, stiff-back award folder. The folder may be procured from ELC Baltimore (stock number 7510-01-097-6004).
3. Wearing of Decorations and Awards. Recipients of decorations, service medals, and other awards are authorized to wear them in accordance with the provisions of this Manual and the applicable provisions concerning awards contained in the Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST M1020.6 (series).

I. Award Maintenance Responsibilities.

1. Awarding Authority. Immediately upon approval of an award, forward copies to the servicing PERSRU responsible for handling the member's Personnel Data Record (PDR), and to CGPC-adm-3 (with members SSN on the upper right hand corner of the citation).
2. Servicing PERSRU. Submit CGHRMS transactions to record all awards earned – for enlisted and officers, active duty and reserves. For enlisted members, credit points are allowed for certain decorations to a maximum of 10 points in arriving at a final multiple for purposes of advancement in rating (see article 5-C-1 of the Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series)).

3. Member. Ultimately, the service member is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of CGHRMS award data, and are encouraged to retain copies to substantiate future possible contentions.